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ABSTRACT

This paper asserts that through foundations courses in teacher education programs, all preservice teachers, not only social studies teachers, should come to understand the concept of cultural influence through an examination of the philosophical, ideological, and historical past. This paper examines the subject-matter content, authentic assessment instruments, and qualitative methodological assignments in two teacher educator, foundations of education classes, experienced over a 2-year period in both a college and university setting. The findings show that most preservice teachers in these foundations courses came to understand the relationship between theory and practice through an approach to content that focused on the milieu of the philosophers and educational theorists and the experience of using qualitative methodology and other authentic assessment designs. Curriculum and assessment models are offered for Randolph Macon Woman's College (Virginia) and Auburn University at Montgomery (Alabama). An analysis of authentic assessment assignments used in this study concludes the paper. (Contains 23 references.) (EH)

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Understanding Cultural Influence: Using Authentic Assessment and Qualitative Methodology to Bridge Theory into Practice.

by

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Understanding Cultural Influence: Using Authentic Assessment and Qualitative Methodology to Bridge Theory into Practice

All teachers, not only social studies teachers, teach, to some extent, aspects of social education. Science teachers, for example, often teach units of study which focus on humankind's relationship to the environment. Within a unit of study such as this, students generally explore ways in which the environment can protect for future generations, thus challenging them to think and plan outside of purely idiosyncratic needs and desires. English teachers too encounter social education issues in their classrooms when students explore concepts such as injustice or persecution, common themes found in the literature of the Holocaust, for example. However, a focus on social issues or problems in any subject area also raises the question of cultural, social, and historical understanding, concepts usually associated with the social studies. Thus, these understandings generate the questions of when and under what conditions are pre-service teachers, whether elementary or secondary, social studies or others, introduced to such concepts as perspective or world view. Moreover, if such an introduction occurs, to what extent are the receivers able to utilize their learning in a meaningful way in the classroom?

The authors of this paper have taken the position that through Foundations courses in teacher-education programs, pre-service teachers come to understand the concept of

cultural influence--something all teachers regardless of age group or subject area should know--through an examination of the philosophical, ideological, and historical past.

However, this approach is not an easy sell. According to countless pre-service teachers (student interns) and their Foundations' instructors, course work in the philosophical, ideological, and historical traditions of American education rank high among subjects in teacher preparation programs in terms of difficulty. Often, pre-service teachers, whether elementary or secondary, complain that the material is too difficult and has little to do with the real world of teaching. Complaints such as "Why do I have to know this [the Foundations of Education], I only want to be a Kindergarten teacher," ring throughout the halls of schools and colleges of education across the United States. Accordingly, these pre-service teachers fail to understand or appreciate the relationship between philosophy, educational theory, and classroom practice. This failure especially affects social studies pre-service teachers who must consider such concepts as cause and effect in their teaching practice.

Too many of our students in education programs are misguided and believe that the only courses which are relevant to their teaching practice are those which focus on the nature of children and how to teach, or rather, human growth and development and the methods of teaching.

The authors of this paper believe, however, that Foundations' courses offer all pre-service teachers the opportunity to gain an understanding of how theory and practice are inextricably linked, an understanding, which is vital to good teaching. Therefore, their joint goals were two-fold: 1) to introduce the philosophical traditions within historical context; and, 2) to create assessment opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of how these traditions inform practice. This paper will examine the subject-matter content, authentic assessment instruments, and qualitative methodological assignments in two teacher educators' Foundations of Education classes, experienced over a two-year period both a college and university setting. The findings will show that most pre-service teachers in these Foundations courses came to understand the relationship between theory and practice through a combination of approach to content, the experience of using qualitative methodology, and experience with other authentic assessment designs.

Hence, classroom subject matter content included biographical overviews of philosophers and educational theorists, as well as a close examination of their philosophies and theories. Instruction focused on the cultural milieu in which philosophers and theorists such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, James, and Dewey, for example, constructed their ideas and systems of thought. The instructors hoped that students would be able to transfer their understanding of how cultural and historical settings influenced the construction of philosophies and theories to how accommodation to one or more theories influence classroom practice. Understanding the cultural influence and historical context of individual theorists, then, was central to the instructors' approach to the philosophical, ideological, and historical traditions of American education. What followed in logical sequence was a range of assessment methods and models. In order to determine if students transferred their understanding of cultural influence on philosophical thought to philosophical or educational theory and classroom practice, the instructors constructed assessment instruments based upon an understanding of authentic assessment practice.

In order to use authentic assessment, however, the writers first challenge was to define it. This task was not easy as authentic assessment is often, but mis-guidedly, used as a synonym for alternative assessment, performance-based assessment, and authentic achievement (Smith, Layng, and Jones, 1996; Einbender & Wood, 1995). One critic, in fact, claims that authentic assessment when properly defined by a standard dictionary leads one into a semantics "no-man's land" of circular and "mystical" proportions (Terwilliger, 1996). One good definition of authentic assessment, however, which best describes our understanding of it, states that it is a "term which describes the process of evaluating a learner's original piece of work or completed task, arrived at based upon a previously acquired body of knowledge, and demonstrated in a concrete form" (Thermer, 1996, p. 1). For our purposes, the definition of authentic assessment also needed to incorporate our instructional goals: 1) to provide curriculum content rigor in our respective courses, and; 2) to model assessment skills consistent with authentic assessment. After consulting numerous articles on assessment and assessment models

(Wiggins, 1989; Einbender and Wood, 1995; Mandel, 1995; Jervis and McDonald, 1996; McLaughlin and Vogt, 1996; Fischer and King, 1995; Denman, 1995), we selected the body of work on authentic assessment generated by Fred Newmann because it offered the best philosophic fit to our approach.

Like Newmann (May 1995), we were aware of the authentic assessment "trap," meaning that student participation in activities "can become an end in itself, regardless of the intellectual quality of students' work" (p. 2). For us, then, the rigor of our curriculum content was central to our respective courses of study. Moreover, McClean and Lockwood (1996) assert that the public at large is concerned over the issue of classroom rigor and levels of achievement. After all, assessment of any kind holds little value if the content or knowledge base of the student is meager or superficial, for even mechanical processors must have something to process. Without this knowledge base, individuals have little to no chance of performing in real-life roles, a fundamental goal of authentic assessment (Terwilliger). Hence, we found Newmann's three criteria for authentic assessment to be compatible with what we, as teacher educators, valued in teaching the Foundations of Education: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and value beyond school (Newmann, et al, 1995). In short, the construction of knowledge points to student participation through oral or written discourse in the production of knowledge (Denman, 1995), not simply naming the discourse others have produced. This construction is demonstrated as students examine the existing knowledge base, strive for in-depth understanding, rather than superficial meaning, and express their conclusions through complex or elaborated communication devices. The third component, value beyond school, appropriately addresses the long-term goals of our respective programs, one of which is to educate pre-service teachers who can contribute in positive and meaningful ways in school restructuring efforts, such as serving as a member of a community-wide task force, school evaluation team, district-level writing team, or other role requiring an understanding of the nature of human differences.

Hence, if our pre-service teachers expect to assume their place as professional teachers, and to accept positions which would require them to see beyond idiosyncratic concerns, then their learning must inform their practice. Learning, in this context, meant the

acquisition of knowledge about education tied to "real life" teaching situations. Our collaborative plan, we concluded, was to lead our students through rigorous curriculum content--biographical accounts, historical overviews, outside readings--and then to construct evaluative or assessment models that would allow each to demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge base and how that knowledge applied to classroom practice. What follows is an overview of the curriculum taught in selected education courses at Randolph Macon Woman's College and Auburn University at Montgomery, as well as the authentic assessment models, including the use of qualitative methodology, used in each course, and the grading rubrics of each teacher educator.

Curriculum and Assessment Models

Randolph Macon Woman's College:

In EDUC 101, Foundations of American Education, at Randolph-Macon Woman's College, the instructor struggled to discover a way to create a meaningful and important introductory course that would address historical, philosophical and social foundations in depth while encouraging students to maintain their enthusiasm and desire to be a teacher, feelings they initially expressed on the first day of this teacher preparation class. The first step was to alter the traditional testing pattern by creating a test that would meet Newmann's criteria for authentic assessment. Thus, the test question(s) needed to build on the academic discipline's knowledge base, demonstrate in-depth understanding, and require students to integrate this knowledge through a construction of learning experience.

The instructor scheduled the first exam approximately one-third of the way through the course; it covered aspects of philosophy, history, and sociology. She provided students with reading selections which represented a range of educational philosophies. The test directions required them to:

> Read each of the paragraphs below. Select any **four** (4 of the 6)) the quotations. For each quotation selected, **(a)** identify the philosophy or approach represented by the statement, **(b)** justify why this statement is representative of the philosophy you identified, **(c)** briefly trace the history or development of this belief system, **(d)** include names of important educators responsible for formulating or refining this

philosophy today , **(e)** describe the institutional characteristics of a school utilizing that system (what would the school or classroom actually look like, how might it function) and, **(f)** explain the extent to which *you* accept this philosophy as a valid educational goal for yourself as a teacher.

While this initial format did meet the criteria for authentic assessment, the assignment has evolved over four semesters to permit students to discuss their responses with classmates prior to writing papers, thus allowing for more collaboration and in-depth analysis. Additionally, in an attempt to create an even stronger link to the real world, students are now situated in a fictional school district, Utopia, U.S., and are to imagine themselves at an open meeting where school board members are presenting final candidates for the position of superintendent.

The reading selections reflect the candidates' beliefs about education and students are required to synthesize the provided information about Utopia, a culturally diverse and economically diverse community seeking to address Goals 2000, technology concerns, and to provide quality education for all students. Students are provided with the assessment criteria at the outset of the assignment.

> Evaluation: Your grade will be based on your ability to briefly explain the education philosophy of each candidate, tracing the history of that philosophy, and briefly describing what the school curriculum would actually emphasize. A summary of potential financial concerns (if taxes are proposed, which ones and why) should be included. Remember, these candidates are applying for a job and thus, wish to convince the public of their vision of education as a path to success for all children. If you chose to use quotations, from the text or any of the readings, insert parenthetical
> ( ) footnotes. Be sure to spell check and proofread for grammar.

Students are provided with at least one week in which to complete this assignment as the goal is to increase the probability of collaborative analysis before answers are written. There is an opportunity for debriefing during class after tests are completed in order for students to share their authentic learning experiences. Students frequently speak of task difficulty but high reward when it comes to learning using this approach. Several students reported actually enjoying the challenge of the test and concluded that they had learned, rather than memorized, the material.

The second test for this course addressed the need for students to become instructional leaders and participants in school improvement. At this point, the focus of the course has moved from the philosophy and history of education to legal, governance and curricular concerns. The instructor's goal for the second half of the course was to help students, particularly those who would be teaching social studies, learn how to interpret data. For this test, students assumed the role of newspaper reporters assigned to attend a PTA meeting where the School Improvement Committee discussed the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll annual survey on American education. The students were allowed to work in pairs and to be creative in the format of their response. Several students used desktop publishing and created fictional towns and newspapers to respond to the test.

Instructions for this test:

> You are the reporter who has been assigned to attend this meeting and then to prepare an in depth analysis, including all pertinent background information about the problems revealed by the report and the range of solutions available to solve them.
>
> In order to complete this assignment correctly you must relate the issues discussed in the report with the topics covered in assigned reading from the text (focusing primarily on chapters 3, 5-9, 11, supplementary articles) and topics discussed in class.
>
> Your editor reminds you that you must be specific when providing information, e.g. if discussing the issue of safety, you must discuss both teachers and students. Additionally, you must cite any rights and/or responsibilities with an explanation of the legal cases or constitutional guarantees involved.
>
> You should use parenthetical notes to cite the page number of your text where you are finding the information. If information is coming from class discussion, cite (class notes). You may also refer to videos shown in class. Be sure to cite the Gallup Poll where necessary. If you are citing an article you read elsewhere, cite correctly (APA).

As in the prior example, students spent class time discussing their experience with the assignment. The most difficult task for students appeared to be the attempt at synthesizing the questions from the poll into several general issues for their "articles." One student was so enthusiastic about her final product, however, that she requested that the instructor make it available for Parent's Weekend as an example of what she had accomplished. Over the past four semesters, students who voluntarily chose to comment about the testing format on their course evaluation forms have been overwhelmingly

positive. Out of 87 registered students, there have been 47 comments related to testing, with 45 positive to three negative responses. The negative comments emphasized a problem with the student's writing skills or the time involved in completing the assignment. The positive comments focused on creativity, the opportunity to synthesize and integrate course content, and the chance to voice personal opinions on issues. Several students commented on their sense of accomplishment upon completing the tests and in their new or enhanced confidence in their ability to think and problem-solve.

Over time, this instructor continued to create additional authentic assignments and tests. This past semester she removed the assigned "Reader" and substituted required class subscriptions to *Education Week* newspaper. Students selected two to three articles each week to journal. Since journal assignments require responses to the chosen newspaper articles across the action, interpretive and critical fields of reflection, students must integrate classroom discussion, textbook reading, practicum experience and personal experience into their journal comments. In this assignment students are usually successful in bridging theory into practice. In the college-administered course evaluation, an open-ended format which asks only for positives and negatives about the class, 16 of 28 registered students for the Spring 1997 semester chose to comment positively on the newspaper assignment. Comments ranged from enjoying the freedom to choose their readings, to approval of the chance to become aware of and to voice their opinions on current issues. Students also commented on their ability to link text book issues with current educational issues discussed in the newspaper. Thus, students demonstrated that they had grasped the original goal of the course, bridging theory into practice.

The weekly newspaper assignment has particular relevance for social studies teachers as it models the use of current issues to make academic knowledge relevant (Walker, 1997). In addition, the goal of the social studies--creating caring competent citizens--is enhanced by using this current issues framework as a way of articulating in-depth understanding of historical, philosophical and sociological concepts. Nickell (1993) reminds us that for students to know the real world, they must venture into it in ways that provide opportunities to understand that decisions have real consequences, and

that choices affect the success or failure of ideas. These pre-service teachers, experienced problem-solving in collaborative, multicultural settings and used these assignments to practice what education reformers believe will be the future for authentic pedagogy and meaningful student performance.

Auburn University at Montgomery:

The course listed in the School of Education's catalogue as FED 600, Philosophy and History of Education, is a graduate-level Alternative Master's course. Traditional Masters' students are those individuals who have completed a degree program in education, and as such have already taken the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of education. Alternative Masters' students hold undergraduate degrees outside of education, for example, undergraduate degrees in history, science, computer science, social work, and so forth. Therefore, for Alternative-Masters' students, FED 600 is one of the first education classes they must take. Most have not studied philosophy as an undergraduate, and few have taken any history course other than a few survey courses. At least half of the members of each class, enrolled during the 1997 school year, expressed their desire to eventually move from classroom teaching into administration, where they will be expected to supervise a diverse faculty. Few imagined that the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of education would have any real relevance to their teaching.

However, the instructor envisioned this course as a grounding experience in the philosophical, ideological, and historical traditions as expressed in educational thought and practice, all of which directly affect both teaching and supervision in primary and secondary schools. As a result, she selected texts which avoided current educational issues, such as those featured in most comprehensive Foundations' texts, because she believed that students had little or no knowledge of either the issues themselves or their antecedents. Instead, she exclusively focused on the history and philosophy of education. She reasoned that one does not build a house from the roof down. With such reasoning in mind, the instructor chose two primary texts chosen for this course: Gutek, Gerald. *The Philosophical and Ideological Perspectives on Education.* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon,

1997, 2ed.), and; Spring, J.L. *The American School Experience, 1642-1993.* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994, 3ed.).

In addition to the texts, the instructor assigned six article reviews and eight position papers. Each student was required to critically examine six articles on selected philosophies and philosophers for their review assignments, and to select a then current educational issue reported on in the newspaper about which they would summarize and then write their perspective. At the center of her evaluation plan were two crucial authentic assessment assignments: 1) an oral history term project, and; 2) a paper suitable for submission to a publication on some aspect of education. The weight assigned to student term projects and papers submitted for publication were twice as much as for the mid-term and final examinations, both of which were essay in nature. After careful reflection, she has since revised her evaluation plan so that the examinations and authentic assessment assignments are equally weighted. This revision is consistent with the instructional goals of ensuring curriculum content rigor and providing opportunities for students to demonstrate competency in the areas of knowledge acquisition and application, within a variety of assessment modes. Thus, as Fischer (1995) reports, when "assessment is aligned with the goals and philosophy, assessment and evaluation become tools for guiding instruction" (p.11). Curriculum alignment is a generally accepted principle of good educational praxis (Einbender and Wood, 1995).

The term project, based on personal interviews with practicing teachers and administrators, is part of an ongoing project to collect the individual oral histories of classroom teachers initiated by O.L. Davis, Jr., at the University of Texas at Austin. As such, this authentic assessment model serves a real life purpose as these collected stories will eventually become part of the Oral History in Education Project when they are deposited in the collection. To prepare for the class for this experience, the instructor asked students to choose collaborative partners and form groups of three or four. Next, she introduced the purpose of the assignment, and discussed personal interview methodology and its techniques. Students then worked in groups to develop a list of interview questions. When group debate was exhausted, the class came together in order to discuss each group's questions and their relevance to our assignment. Students

understood that the goal of this assignment was for each to determine the philosophical strands of the interviewee based upon the results of the personal interview. Hence, the importance of good questioning skills was emphasized in order to extract the desired information.

The class discussed and voted on each question for inclusion in a class-developed interview guide. Not all questions were accepted, and many were restructured. Students learned through this in-class experience how to frame questions in order to provide opportunities for the interviewee to respond in a precise way to the question. The final interview guide contained 25 questions which covered the early background of the person interviewed, his or her early schooling experiences, career choice upon graduation from high school, college preparation, internship, and teaching practice over time. Each student was responsible for selecting a practicing teacher or administrator to interview and securing a signed release form. Following these interviews, all students transcribed their tape-recorded interviews and developed a one to two-page abstract to accompany the tape recording and transcription. The abstract contained the name of the teacher, school affiliation, administrative position or grade level, and an encapsulation of the student's findings. These findings briefly described the interviewee's philosophical strands or position through observable practice or answers to questions. At the completion of this authentic assessment project, most students expressed surprise at how they found themselves to either be in philosophical alignment with the teacher or administrator they interviewed, somewhat aligned, or not aligned at all.

The second authentic assessment assignment required students to develop a research paper for submission to a professional publication. Those enrolled in FED 600 during the Winter 1997 quarter became interested, owing to a flurry of newspaper stories, in the question of ebonics. Each student developed his or her own position on this topic with supporting evidence. In addition, students learned the steps of composing a cover letter. Upon completion, they submitted their final papers to the instructor who discussed the merits of each paper with individual authors. All papers were then submitted to appropriate publications, those that called for current topics as well as publications that

sought papers from graduate students and beginning teachers. The Winter 1997 class has recently experienced success as six of its members were published this summer in *Insights*, a bulletin of the John Dewey Society. The experience of writing for publications was intended to have long-term or beyond-the-classroom effect. As professional teachers or administrators, they will be expected to not only keep current in their respective fields, but also to be contributors of an expanding knowledge base in education.

The rubrics for both assignments were similar in nature, yet unique to the assignment. The criteria for the term project, for example, was based upon the following: All students were expected to use the interview guide. If a particular question was omitted, then the student had to furnish a written explanation at the end of the transcription regarding the omission. All term projects had to contain the following elements: interview guide, abstract, transcription, signed release form, and taped interview. Hence, student grades depended upon the "completeness" of the project. While differences between the interviews existed--some interviewees elaborated, others simply answered the questions--the instructor could not objectively judge the value of one interview over another.

The research paper was also based upon a "completeness" factor, owing to the fact that all students submitted their papers to the instructor on an individual basis. She then worked with each student individually on the final editing. As can be expected, some final drafts needed extensive editing, while others were quite good as written. This editing process gave the instructor an opportunity to individually address each student's writing, in terms of author strength and weakness. A number of students found this individual attention to be a significant factor in helping them to realize their writing potential.

Analysis of Authentic Assessment Assignments used in this study

Some authors claim that authentic forms of assessment are "a more qualitative and valid alternative," to traditional paper and pencil testing practice, and are closely linked with the time-honored endeavor of apprenticeship (Kerka, 1995). For us,

assessment goals had less to do with adopting forms of authentic assessment because they were new and innovative, and more to do with our joint belief that they provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills at connecting theoretical constructs to classroom practice.

In the case of the written examinations based upon a simulated experience for students enrolled at Randolph Macon Woman's College, this form of authentic assessment placed the responsibility of knowledge construction squarely on the shoulders of the students. According to Rudner and Boston, (in Kerka 1995), "the process of assessment is itself a constructivist learning experience, requiring students to apply thinking skills to understand the nature of high quality performance, and to provide feedback to themselves and others" (p. 1). Hence, Randolph Macon students often created elaborate matrixes in order to graphically see how the information gleaned from their lectures, readings, and research, was integrated or related. Through the use of these devices, students evaluated the characteristics of philosophical positions and discussed in writing how well-known theorists connected to certain educational issues. Furthermore, since students assumed positions as members of a hiring panel, they determined which candidate was the best philosophic fit for their particular imaginary school district.

This simulation contains real world possibilities, which is a feature of authentic assessment. Practicing teachers are often asked to be part of a search committee. Therefore, it is imperative that they understand the process of selection, which is based upon assumed prior knowledge of philosophical thought and its practice, as well as historical tradition. This "practice through simulation" appears to incorporate elements of what Kerka (1995) refers to as apprenticeship. Although not yet in a school setting, these pre-service teachers practice the art of informed decision making through experiences such as testing simulations, an authentic assessment model.

The instructor based her evaluation rubric on what Smith (1996) defines as an analytic rubric, one which consists of score points assigned to various elements. In contrast, a holistic rubric seeks to evaluate the overall effect. The analytic rubric model then is the most appropriate selection for criterion-referenced examinations, such as the

two authentic assessment assignments used in Foundations classes at Randolph Macon Woman's College. One of the writers' stated goals, one might recall, was to provide curriculum content rigor. Hence, criterion-referenced tests "measure the content of a specific curriculum, and the scores that are reported represent how well a student has mastered that curriculum" (McClean and Lockwood, 3-4). In the process of demonstrating mastery, however, students also revealed their level of understanding of how their acquired knowledge translates into classroom practice, an equal component in the evaluation process.

The oral history term project and research paper, two authentic assessment assignments in selected classes at Auburn University at Montgomery, were evaluated holistically in the latter case, and with specific criteria in the first. The oral history or interview assignment included a set of criteria which concerned all students. Other learning included collaboration on the development of the interview guide, although students were not graded on their collaborative efforts. In some models, (Royer 1996; Fischer and King, 1995), collaboration is central to the success of the authentic assessment assignment. However, for this assignment, students either completed the entire assignment or received no credit as all parts--interview guide, release form, transcription, taped interview--were essential to the project.

As for the research paper, the instructor chose to evaluate this assignment holistically. The impact of the topic and the position taken by the student were crucial to his or her success in securing publication. Hence, some papers, while well-written, lacked that certain dynamic quality found in most publishable papers, although all were held to standard English usage, grammatical form, and standards of punctuation.

The research paper evaluation assignment also fulfilled one of authentic assessment's primary goals--connection to real world situations. Many professional teachers conduct action research in their classrooms. As such, the results of these action research projects bring authentic classroom occurrences and the drama of teaching to scores of pre-service teachers vis-à-vis teaching journals. Therefore, the expectation for Alternative Masters students in FED 600 (Philosophical and Historical perspectives) at Auburn University at Montgomery is to demonstrate an understanding of the role of the

professional teacher. This understanding is accomplished through authentic assessment assignments such as the end-of-the-quarter research paper, which is then submitted for publication.

In sum, the writers based all four models presented on the assumption of curriculum content rigor, beyond the classroom experience, and qualitative tools of the discipline, criteria which conform more closely with Newmann's description of authentic assessment than that of other educationists. Additionally, course readings at both Randolph Macon Woman's College and Auburn University at Montgomery were substantial. Instructors, for example, selected primary texts and outside readings which challenged students to synthesize philosophical, ideological, and historical concepts in order to render an understanding of present educational issues. Generally, outside readings emanated from juried journals. In addition, the instructors modeled authentic assessment skills, which were included as part of the over all content. Hence, students came to understand the necessity of balance between content and process. The polarization of teacher-educators into "facts" versus "skills" people has little place in any classroom. Students must achieve both knowledge and the skills required to apply that knowledge.

The second instructional goal of this collaborative effort was rooted in the belief that student retention of knowledge would be minimal unless tied to practice. Hence, our instructional goals were inseparable from our assessment goals. Uninformed practice, we reasoned, could be likened to a ship without a rudder. Therefore, our joint desire was to challenge our students through rigorous content and course work, and to create opportunities for them to demonstrate through authentic assessment, that as soon-to-be practicing teachers, they a)understand the demands of the professional teacher, b)have gained the necessary insights, and c)are prepared to offer sound classroom practice based on an informed mind.

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